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ABSTRACT

The barriers that poor fathers face in paying child support and how existing programs assist them were studied and contrasted to the barriers faced by poor custodial mothers using data from the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF). Efforts to serve these fathers through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families welfare-to-work grants, and demonstration grants are also discussed. According to the NSAF, 2.6 million nonresident fathers have family incomes below the poverty line, and most of them face multiple employment barriers, including a criminal record, lack of a high school education, relatively little recent work experience, and poor health. Although these employment barriers are similar to those faced by poor custodial mothers, poor nonresident fathers are significantly less likely than poor custodial mothers to participate in training, education, and job search activities as well as income security programs. Given that Congress expects poor nonresident fathers to contribute financial support to their children, it may want to consider making employment services and work-support programs more available to poor nonresident fathers. An appendix discussions developing weights for nonresident fathers. (Contains 2 tables, 6 figures, 15 endnotes, and 15 references.) (Author/SLD)

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Elaine Sorensen
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00–07

September
2000

Assessing the New Federalism
An Urban Institute Program to Assess Changing Social Policies

Assessing the New Federalism

Assessing the New Federalism is a multiyear Urban Institute project designed to analyze the devolution of responsibility for social programs from the federal government to the states. It focuses primarily on health care, income security, employment and training programs, and social services. Researchers monitor program changes and fiscal developments. Alan Weil is the project director. In collaboration with Child Trends, the project studies changes in family well-being. The project provides timely, nonpartisan information to inform public debate and to help state and local decisionmakers carry out their new responsibilities more effectively.

Key components of the project include a household survey, studies of policies in 13 states, and a database with information on all states and the District of Columbia. Publications and the database are available free of charge on the Urban Institute's Web site: http://www.urban.org. This paper is one in a series of discussion papers analyzing information from these and other sources.

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Questions about the National Survey of America's Families should be addressed to NSAF@ui.urban.org.

Abstract

According to the 1997 National Survey of America's Families, 2.6 million nonresident fathers have family incomes below the poverty line and most of them face multiple employment barriers, including a criminal record, lack of a high school education, relatively little recent work experience, and poor health. Although these employment barriers are similar to those faced by poor custodial mothers, poor nonresident fathers are significantly less likely than poor custodial mothers to participate in training, education, and job search activities as well as income security programs. Given that Congress expects poor nonresident fathers to contribute financially to their children, it may want to consider making employment services and work-support programs more available to poor nonresident fathers.

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Introduction

The popular image of a nonresident father who does not pay child support is that of a "deadbeat," one who is able to pay but shirks his duty for no good reason. This image does not fit the 2.6 million nonresident fathers who are poor themselves and have a limited ability to provide support to their nonresident children. Nonetheless, our society expects poor mothers to work and use their earnings to support their children; certainly poor fathers should do the same. What policies can our society develop to convert poor nonpaying fathers into child support payers?

In this paper, we examine the barriers that poor fathers face in paying child support and how existing government programs assist them. We contrast these barriers to those faced by poor custodial mothers and examine how public policy assists them. We do this using data from the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF), one of few surveys to identify nonresident fathers and one of even fewer to provide recent data. We then discuss recent efforts to serve these fathers through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, welfare-to-work grants and demonstration grants. We conclude with some suggestions on where to go from here.

Using NSAF to Examine Nonresident Fathers

Nonresident fathers are identified in the NSAF by affirmative answers to the following question: Do you (or your partner) have children under the age of 18 who live outside of this household?[1] Using this question and the population weights supplied in the NSAF, we estimate that there are 7.2 million nonresident fathers. In other words, 7.2 million men self-identify as nonresident fathers. On the other hand, NSAF also estimates that there are 20.1 million children

with a nonresident father in 1997. Based on this figure and the race/ethnicity of the children, we estimate that there were 11.1 million custodial mothers that year.[2] Assuming that there is approximately one nonresident father for each custodial mother, these findings suggest that the NSAF captures about 65 percent of the nonresident father population. Among black and Hispanic nonresident fathers, the figure is lower. We estimate that only 57 percent of black and Hispanic nonresident fathers, but 71 percent of white nonresident fathers, self-identify as such in the NSAF.

Nonresident fathers are underrepresented in household surveys, such as the National Survey of America's Families, for three basic reasons. First, the NSAF is a household survey, which does not include the institutionalized population or those in the military. Thus, nonresident fathers in these situations are excluded from the survey. Second, the NSAF, as do all nationally representative household surveys, reflects the census undercount of certain populations. While efforts were made to correct for the undercount in the NSAF, such procedures still left black men in their thirties undercounted, a group of particular importance among nonresident fathers. Finally, the NSAF did not identify some nonresident fathers because the fathers—or their partners—were not aware that they belonged in this category, or because they did not answer this question truthfully.

To examine the characteristics of all nonresident fathers, we reweight the nonresident fathers in the survey with the same type of method used in other descriptive work on nonresident fathers (see Sorensen 1997, Garfinkel et al. 1998). The reweights are developed by first estimating the number of nonresident fathers who are missing in the NSAF for reasons discussed

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above, and then making assumptions about the characteristics of these missing men, and finally, reweighting the fathers in the survey with characteristics similar to those who are missing in NSAF. (See the appendix for details).

Brief Overview of Nonresident Fathers and Their Children

Before describing poor nonresident fathers who do not pay child support, we describe the entire population of nonresident fathers to provide a context for this subpopulation. Figure 1 shows that, even in 1997, the largest subgroup of nonresident fathers (43 percent) was able to pay child support but did not, representing 4.9 million nonresident fathers.[3] This suggests that there are plenty of "deadbeats" and that child support enforcement needs access to strong enforcement tools to ensure that children are supported by their nonresident parents. Figure 1 also shows that nearly all nonresident fathers who do pay formal child support have incomes *above* the poverty level. In other words, nonresident fathers are rarely poor *and* pay child support (3 percent). Nonetheless, nonresident fathers have a relatively high poverty rate—23 percent are poor.

Figure 1 also shows that the child support characteristics of nonresident fathers are similiar to those of children who have a nonresident father, but their poverty characteristics are different. Only 35 percent of children who have a nonresident father receive formal child support, which is not statistically significantly different from the 36 percent of nonresident fathers who report paying formal child support. However, 40 percent of children with a nonresident father are poor, while only 23 percent of nonresident fathers have family incomes that low. Thus, children with a nonresident father are 70 percent more likely to be poor than their fathers.

Poor Mothers and Fathers Have Similar Socioeconomic Characteristics

Table 1 shows that the majority of poor fathers not paying child support are nonwhite—41 percent are black and 17 percent are Hispanic.[4] These men are also older than one might expect; their average age is 36. Virtually none (2 percent) have a college degree, and more than 40 percent have not finished high school. We also find that custodial mothers who are poor and do not receive child support have demographic characteristics similar to those of poor nonresident fathers who do not pay formal support.[5] For example, Table 1 shows that poor nonresident fathers who don't pay child support have educational characteristics virtually identical to those of poor custodial mothers who do not receive child support.

At the time of the survey, only 31 percent of poor fathers who do not pay child support reported that they were working (table 1). In contrast, 38 percent of poor custodial mothers who do not receive child support said they were working. Thus, poor nonreceiving custodial mothers are more likely to work than poor nonpaying nonresident fathers.

It is important to note, however, that incarceration affects about a quarter of poor fathers who do not pay child support. In contrast, none of the custodial mothers are institutionalized. Obviously, incarceration severely limits, if not eliminates, the ability to work in the labor market. Even after they leave prison, work prospects for ex-offenders do not improve that much since their criminal records and interrupted labor force participation make them unattractive to prospective employers. Nearly 40 percent of the fathers who were *not* working were institutionalized.

Among poor fathers who were *not* institutionalized at the time of the survey, 42 percent were working (table 2). This work force participation rate is statistically significantly higher than

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that among poor nonreceiving custodial mothers (38 percent). Among poor nonpaying fathers who worked in 1996, most held a full-time job but did not work year-round. In fact, the average number of weeks worked in 1996 among those who worked was only 29 weeks. The average earnings of these working fathers was $5,570 that year. Poor nonreceiving custodial mothers who worked in 1996 worked fewer hours per week, on average, than poor nonpaying fathers, but they tended to work more weeks per year. Their average annual earnings ($5,276) were only 6 percent lower than those of poor working fathers who did not pay child support.

Poor Mothers and Fathers Face Many Employment Barriers

Why are so many poor nonpaying fathers who are *not* institutionalized out of work?[6] To answer this question, we examined several factors that previous research has identified as potential barriers to work—health limitations, limited education, limited work experience, lack of English skills, transportation barriers, lack of access to a telephone, and shelter instability (Zedlewski 1999). Since some of these characteristics are hard to quantify, we use answers to certain questions as proxies for relevant characteristics. For instance, for limited language skills, we look at the percentage of parents whose interviews were conducted in Spanish. For the frequency of each of these characteristics, please see figure 2.

We find that poor nonpaying (noninstitutionalized) fathers encounter many of the same employment barriers as poor nonreceiving custodial mothers. Lack of education is the most common barrier encountered by both groups of parents; 42 percent of these fathers and 43 percent of these mothers lack a high school diploma or GED. Lack of recent work experience is another large obstacle to employment, and again these mothers and fathers are equally affected

with nearly one-third not having held a job in more than three years.

Health limitations are the second most commonly identified employment barrier for poor (nonincarcerated) nonpaying fathers. We label a respondent as having poor health in two ways. Either the parent responds that he or she has poor health (the lowest option on a five-point scale ranging from poor to excellent) or the parent responds that he or she has a disability which limits the types of work he or she can do. Forty-two percent of the fathers and 26 percent of the mothers have at least one health-related barrier. Since parents with health problems are self-identified, we do not know the extent to which these individuals may be able to participate in the labor force in some capacity.

Not having telephone service, a significant barrier during a job search process, is also relatively common among poor custodial mothers and nonresident fathers. According to the NSAF, 26 percent of the poor nonreceiving mothers and 32 percent of poor nonpaying fathers lived in a household without a telephone at the time of the survey.

Three other barriers often affecting poor parents—lack of English skills, transportation barriers, and housing instability—were not particularly common for these mothers and fathers, at least according to our proxies. Like their children's mothers, roughly one-tenth of the fathers lived in a household in which the interview was conducted in Spanish. Six percent of the fathers (and 8 percent of the mothers) presumably have limited access to transportation (outside a metropolitan area but do not live in a household with a car). Finally, 5 percent of these fathers and 6 percent of these mothers had to move out of their home as a result of their inability to pay rent.

How Do These Fathers and Mothers Support Themselves?

Given that employment is so uncommon among these mothers and fathers, one wonders how they support themselves. The simple answer is, not very well. In 1996, these mothers' and fathers' family incomes, were, on average, about half of what they needed to scale the poverty line. As we show in figure 3, the big difference in sources of income between the families of poor mothers and poor fathers in 1996 was that mothers were more likely to rely on cash assistance than fathers.

Figure 3 shows that, in 1996, the largest single source of family income for both poor nonreceiving custodial mothers and nonpaying nonresident fathers was their personal earnings, which accounted, on average, for 46 percent of poor nonpaying fathers' family income and 38 percent of poor nonreceiving mothers' family income. Earnings of other family members was also an important source of income for both poor mothers and fathers, representing 17 percent of poor mothers' family income and 24 percent of poor fathers' family income.

Not surprisingly, poor nonreceiving custodial mothers were more likely than poor nonpaying nonresident fathers to rely on cash assistance from the government—AFDC, Supplementary Security Income (SSI), general assistance, or emergency assistance. This source of income accounted for, on average, one third of poor nonreceiving custodial mothers' family income and 17 percent of poor nonpaying fathers' family income. On the other hand, poor nonpaying fathers' families were more likely to depend on social insurance—social security, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, and veteran's assistance—than the mothers' families. An average of 10 percent of their family income came from social insurance as opposed

to 6 percent for the mothers' families.

As one would expect, poor custodial mothers lacking child support had, on average, substantially more children to care for than poor nonresident fathers not paying formal support. Both families had, on average, roughly 1.5 adults. All the mothers, however, lived with their own children in their household, averaging 2.1 children per family. In contrast, only 37 percent of the fathers lived with their own children, averaging 0.8 children per family. For these reasons, even though the mothers lived in families with more money, they nonetheless were living at the same level of poverty as fathers.

What Efforts Are Taken to Overcome Employment Barriers?

In 1997, poor custodial mothers who did not receive child support were more likely than poor nonpaying fathers to engage in activities likely to increase their employment and earnings potential. Roughly one-fifth of these mothers reported that they participated in job-specific training or general educational training, compared with 3 percent of the fathers (figure 4). In addition, 11 percent of these mothers—but only 5 percent of poor fathers—reported taking classes or workshops such as job assistance or job clubs in order to find work.

Interestingly, we also find that poor nonreceiving custodial mothers are more likely than poor nonpaying fathers to look for work when they are out of a job. More than one-third (36 percent) of poor nonreceiving custodial mothers who were not working reported that they had looked for work in the past four weeks. In contrast, only 16 percent of poor nonpaying fathers who were not working at the time of the survey said that they were looking for work (table 2).

These differences in training and job-search activities may be caused by differences in

access to programs that provide employment-related services or require job-search activities. As we show below, about half of poor custodial mothers receive welfare, which now requires participation in work-related activities such as training and job search. Furthermore, employment-related programs that target poor adults typically give priority to welfare recipients. Thus, poor nonresident fathers have less access to employment-related services than poor custodial mothers.

Who Depends on the Income Safety Net?

In 1996, poor custodial mothers were much more likely than poor nonresident fathers to receive AFDC, food stamps, and Medicaid but were only half as likely to receive SSI. Figure 5 shows that nearly half of the poor custodial mothers received AFDC and 70 percent received food stamps, but only 5 percent received SSI. In contrast, less than 1 percent of the fathers received AFDC and 16 percent received food stamps, but 9 percent received SSI.

Over half of poor nonreceiving mothers (58 percent) were receiving Medicaid at the time of the survey, but only a quarter of poor nonpaying fathers were. If this had not been the case, the percentage of these mothers without health insurance, 28 percent, would have been much closer to the uninsurance rate of the fathers, 60 percent of whom were not covered by any form of health insurance (see Figure 6). Only 12 percent of these mothers and fathers had private health insurance.

These participation rates among poor custodial mothers and nonresident fathers are not particularly surprising once the eligibility criteria for these programs are examined. Until 1996, the basic AFDC program was primarily intended for single-parent families. Nonresident fathers were never eligible for this program. Most of the few fathers with children living elsewhere who

received AFDC in 1996 were living with their own *new* children. Medicaid eligibility has historically been linked to AFDC and SSI participation. Thus, nearly all the nonresident fathers receiving Medicaid in 1997 were also receiving AFDC or SSI. The Food Stamp Program is the only means-tested program that has historically been available to all poor households, regardless of the presence of children. Interestingly, however, figure 5 shows that only 16 percent of poor nonpaying (noninstitutionalized) fathers participated in this program in contrast to 70 percent of poor nonreceiving mothers.

How Has Government's Response Changed since 1996?

In 1996, Congress fundamentally changed government's support for needy families. Most notably, it eliminated a 60-year-old open-ended entitlement program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), and replaced it with block grants to states and the new time-limited TANF program. These and other reforms were quite sweeping, but they continued a general theme of Congress of placing greater responsibility on poor parents for lifting themselves and their children out of poverty. Certainly, the new law applied these expectations to both custodial and nonresident parents.

Although the 1996 welfare reform is best known for its changes to AFDC, it also significantly changed child support enforcement laws. In general, it gave enforcement agencies more authority and greater access to information to establish paternity and collect child support. However, it also mandated that states have procedures in place that allow courts to order noncompliant noncustodial parents into work activities, but it did not mention how this mandate should be funded. One interpretation of the placement of this provision was that Title IV-D, the

child support enforcement program, would pay for the implementation of this law, but the federal government ruled that work activities were not an allowable IV-D expense and that states should use their TANF funds to pay for these activities.

Under the new TANF program, states were given considerable flexibility in determining who will be served and what services will be provided. In theory, this new program could serve nonresident parents, but such an extension has been extremely slow-going. The primary aim of welfare reform in 1996 was to reduce welfare dependency, through mandatory time limits and stricter work requirements. Thus, extending welfare to new populations was not a high priority among states.[7] Nonetheless, a few states began using TANF funds on nonresident fathers relatively early on, but these efforts are site-specific and not statewide, relying on relatively small amounts of TANF dollars.[8]

Other states may have been reluctant to spend TANF funds on nonresident fathers out of lack of understanding of how to use these funds for them. The Department of Health and Human Services issued regulations in April 1999 that clarified this issue.[9] It remains to be seen what new TANF programs for nonresident parents are introduced by states as they become more familiar with the new regulations.[10]

In 1996, food stamp eligibility rules were time-limited for "able-bodied childless adults." A time limit of six months over any three-year period was imposed for any adult between the ages of 18 and 50 who did not live with their own children and were fit for employment. Although the exact impact of this change has not yet been measured, the time limit is expected to disproportionately affect poor nonresident fathers, reducing their access to food stamps.[11]

In 1996, Congress "delinked" TANF and Medicaid eligibility, the latter of which historically served AFDC and SSI recipients. Medicaid eligibility did not change much, but Congress did allow states greater flexibility for its expansion. Although several states have expanded their Medicaid program, we are not aware of any state that has included nonresident fathers in their expanison.[12]

Welfare to Work (WtW), a $3 billion federal program established in 1997, was intended to provide employment-related services to the hardest-to-employ TANF recipients. Through WtW, a broader array of employment-related services was made available to TANF recipients. Nonresident parents of children who were long-term TANF recipients were also made eligible for this program, the first time that a federal program explicitly targeted employment-related services to this population.

WtW programs have had difficulty serving nonresident fathers, in part, because the original eligibility criteria were too restrictive. WtW programs had expected nonresident fathers to comprise 20 percent of their clients, but the most recent data show that they represent about half that figure (Perez-Johnson, Hershey, and Belotti 2000). Congress relaxed these eligibility criteria (as well as the eligibility criteria for TANF recipients) in November 1999. Data are not yet available to ascertain how the new criteria might affect nonresident father enrollment in these programs. It is important to note, however, that WtW is slated to end soon. Congress has already extended the original time period for this program, but it has not added new funding to the original $3 billion allocation and it does not appear likely that it will. Thus, this funding stream will probably not be available to serve nonresident fathers in the long run.

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In addition to WtW and TANF efforts to serve poor nonresident fathers, the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) has played an active role in promoting responsible fatherhood. In 1997, the federal government waived its requirement that prohibited child support dollars to be spent on employment-related services and funded eight demonstration projects to serve low-income noncustodial fathers.[13] More recently, the federal government approved ten additional waiver applications to use child support dollars to serve this population. These latter projects, which are part of the Partners for Fragile Families Demonstration, have only just begun, and thus data are not yet available regarding their effectiveness.

An earlier demonstration project, Parents' Fair Share (PFS), targeted nonresident fathers of children on AFDC who were behind in their child support payments. PFS began as a pilot program in 1992 and ended in 1996.[14] The program aims to increase these men's child support payments and improve their employability and labor-force participation. Recent findings suggest that PFS achieved its first aim—to increase child support payments—but had less success at improving the job prospects and earnings of the fathers (Martinez and Miller 2000). It is worth noting, however, that this part of the evaluation did not compare randomly assigned individuals from the target population—unemployed nonresident fathers whose children were receiving AFDC and who were not paying formal child support. Rather the treatment and control groups met the target population criteria *and* responded to a legal notice to appear before a court regarding their nonpayment of child support.[15] If individuals who respond to a legal notice are more likely to work and seek out services to help them work, then it's not surprising that Parents' Fair Share had little impact on employment.

Where Do We Go from Here?

About 2.6 million nonresident fathers have family incomes below the poverty line. These fathers generally face the same employment barriers that poor custodial mothers face, yet they are significantly less likely to participate in job-search and other job-enhancing activities. There are few programs to provide these fathers with employment-related services, but these services are an integral part of TANF programs that serve custodial mothers. If we expect poor nonresident fathers to pay child support, we should consider making employment-related services available to them.

Another important component of the strategy of moving poor mothers into the workforce has been to support their wages with other benefits: food stamps, health insurance, the EITC, and, in some states, retaining a portion of their TANF grant as they go to work. Most poor nonresident fathers do not receive these benefits. Food stamps are time-limited for able-bodied adults who do not live with their children. Medicaid does not reach most of these fathers, and they are not eligible for the EITC or TANF cash assistance. For poor mothers, the message from Congress is that, if you go to work to support your children, the government will provide certain supports to help make work pay. Yet, poor nonresident fathers who pay their child support do not have similar access to these supports. To rectify this imbalance, we should consider making work support programs that are available to poor mothers available to poor nonresident fathers as well.

Endnotes

1. The question regarding minor children living outside of the household is asked of all respondents in the survey, but 65 percent of those who responded to the question are the female partner of the man in question rather than the man himself. This is referred to as a proxy response, which is common in household surveys, but should be acknowledged, especially on sensitive topics such as this.

2. The NSAF cannot identify the population of custodial mothers. To get our estimates of custodial mothers, we used the 1997 Current Population Survey-Child Support Supplement to determine multiplicative factors that were then applied to the number of children with a nonresident father in NSAF (for three race/ethnic groups).

3. Throughout this paper we distinguish between fathers who pay formal child support and fathers who do not. This latter group may be paying informal child support, but we identify them as "nonpayers" because we are interested in providing information about fathers who are outside of the formal child support system and asking whether additional services should be targeted toward them.

4. In the rest of the paper, we will refer to fathers who do not pay formal child support as nonpayers for ease of presentation. As noted above, they could be paying informal support.

5. The reweighting process ensures that the racial composition of nonresident fathers and custodial mothers are similar, but their educational distributions are not.

6.For this section and all later sections of this paper, we focus on noninstitutionalized fathers, since fathers in jail are unable to work outside jail and earn relatively little, if any, money while incarcerated.

7. One exception is the expansion of the old AFDC-UP program. Most states eliminated the old distinctions in AFDC eligibility rules between one- and two-parent families.

8. Reichert (1999) mentions California, Arizona, Florida, and Iowa has having used TANF funds for nonresident father program initiatives (45–46).

9. It is worth noting, however, that even after DHHS issued clarifications of its TANF regulations, one advocacy organization still discouraged its members from pressing state representatives for expansions of TANF eligibility to nonresident fathers for fear that spending TANF dollars on fathers may result in fewer TANF resources available to mothers. See Feeley, 2000.

10. For recent information on serving nonresident fathers with TANF dollars, see Reichert (2000).

11. Sorensen and Lerman, "Welfare Reform and Low-Income Noncustodial Fathers."

12. In fact, we doubt that any state could extend Medicaid eligibility to nonresident fathers under existing law. See Krebs-Carter and Holahan 2000.

13. Demonstration funding for these programs will end this year, but the federal government has hired the Center for Policy Research to evaluate their effectiveness.

14. Sites in seven states—California, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, and Tennessee—participated in the demonstration phase. Three other states, Alabama, Minnesota, and Missouri, had been part of the pilot phase, but were not included in the final evaluation conducted by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC).

15. Earl Johnson et al. *Fathers' Fair Share* (p 8).

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Appendix. Developing Weights for Nonresident Fathers

The reweighting process consists of several steps. First, we ascertain how many men are missing from the NSAF as a result of coverage issues (i.e., the limited survey frame and the undercount). Second, we estimate how many of these men are nonresident fathers. Third, we make educated assumptions about the characteristics of these missing nonresident fathers. Fourth, we assume that there are equal numbers of custodial mothers and nonresident fathers by race/ethnicity and payment status and determine how many nonresident fathers are still missing after taking into account coverage issues. These fathers are assumed to be missing as a result of reporting issues. They are assumed to have the characteristics of the fathers in the survey, controlling for race/ethnicity and payment status. Finally, we reweight the nonresident fathers in the survey to reflect the number and characteristics of the missing fathers.

To estimate the number of nonresident fathers who are excluded from the NSAF as a result of institutionalization, the census undercount, or being in the military, we first estimate the total number of men between the ages of 18 and 49 who are missing from the NSAF for these reasons. We choose an upper age of 49 because we expect that nearly all nonresident fathers absent from the NSAF for these reasons would be under the age of 50. We use the U.S. Census Bureau's 1997 population estimates of the total resident population, civilian population, civilian noninstitutionalized population, and resident population plus military overseas, in order to calculate the number of men ages 18 to 49 who are institutionalized or serving in the military. Our estimates of the number of men missing from the NSAF as a result of the census undercount are derived from estimates by J. Gregory Robinson et al. (1993) of the percentage of the total population undercounted in the 1990 census. All of these estimates are made for three age groups

(19-29; 30-39; 40-49) and three race/ethnicity groups (black (non-Hispanic), Hispanic, and other).

Once we have estimated the number of men ages 18 to 49 who are excluded from the NSAF for each of the above reasons, we estimate the percentage of these men who are nonresident fathers. We use data from the Survey of Inmates in State Correctional Facilities conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice in 1991 to estimate the percentage of institutionalized men who are nonresident fathers. Since there are no data on the fatherhood characteristics of the undercounted population, we assume that they are similar to those of unmarried institutionalized men. We assume that the percentage of excluded military men who are nonresident fathers is the same as the percentage of men in the NSAF who are identified as nonresident fathers.

Once we have identified why nonresident fathers are underrepresented in the NSAF, we then make assumptions about the characteristics of these missing fathers in order to reweight the nonresident fathers identified in the NSAF. We assume that all of the nonresident fathers not identified in the NSAF are between the ages of 18 and 49. Undercounted nonresident fathers are assumed to resemble nonresident fathers who are "impoverished" and don't pay child support, meaning that they have family income below the official poverty threshold based on family size and/or have personal income below the poverty threshold for a single individual and they do not pay child support. We made this assumption because ethnographic research shows that the undercounted tend to be exceedingly poor relative to the counted (de la Puente 1993). Institutionalized nonresident fathers are assumed to resemble nonresident fathers who are impoverished and do not pay child support, except that we assume that they have no income and do not work. We assume that nonresident fathers in the military resemble nonresident fathers of

the same age group and race/ethnicity as those identified in the NSAF.

Once we have estimated how many nonresident fathers are missing from the NSAF as a result of the undercount, institutionalization, and being in the military and made assumptions about their characteristics, we estimate the number of fathers who are missing in the NSAF as a result of underreporting. We assume that the total number of nonresident fathers equals the number of custodial mothers by race/ethnicity and payment status and subtract the number of nonresident fathers who are in the survey or who are missing as a result of coverage issues (within each race/ethnicity and payment status). The difference, or residual, is attributed to underreporting of nonresident fatherhood. We then assume that the fathers who are missing as a result of underreporting have similiar characteristics to the fathers in the survey within each of these race/ethnicity/payment statuses (i.e., within the following categories: Hispanic payers, Hispanic nonpayers, black (non-Hispanic) payers, black (non-Hispanic) nonpayers, other payers, other nonpayers).

This entire process leads to a set of new weights that are applied to the nonresident fathers in the survey. The reweighted data are then expected to reflect the entire population of nonresident fathers, including those who are undercounted, institutionalized, in the military, or underreporting their nonresident fatherhood.

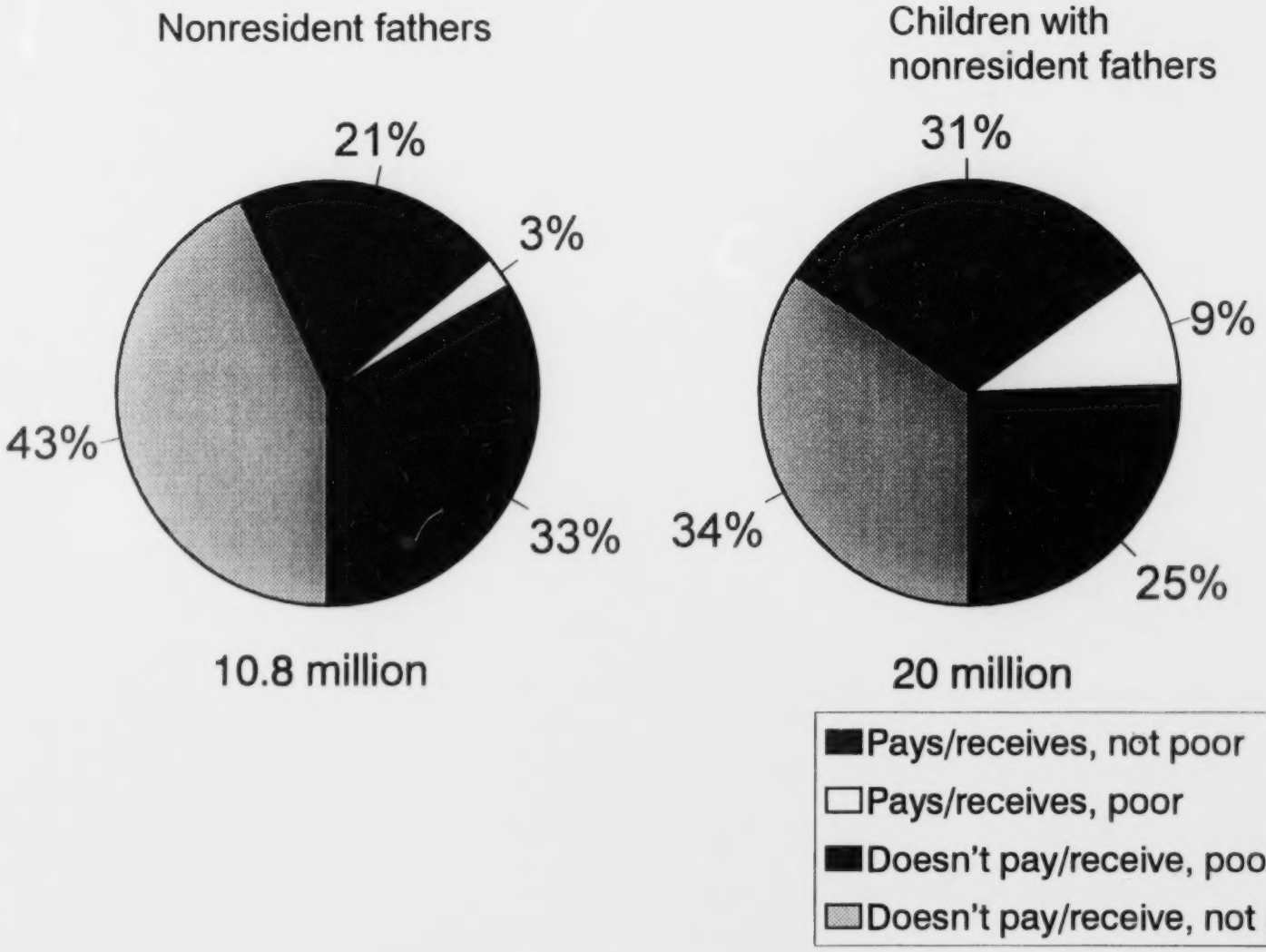
Table 1. Socioeconomic Characteristics of Poor Nonresident Fathers Who Do Not Pay Child Support and Poor Custodial Mothers Who Do Not Receive Child Support

Characteristics	Poor dads who don't pay under an order	Poor moms who don't receive under an order
White	39%	38%
Black	41%	37%
Hispanic	17%	23%
Other	4%	2%
Education:		
<high school	42%	43%
=high school	56%	54%
>high school	2%	3%
Average Age	36 years	32 years
Percent Working	31%	38%
Percent Institutionalized	26%	0%

Table 2. Employment Characteristics of Poor Noninstitutionalized Nonresident Fathers Who Do Not Pay Child Support and Poor Custodial Mothers Who Do Not Receive Child Support

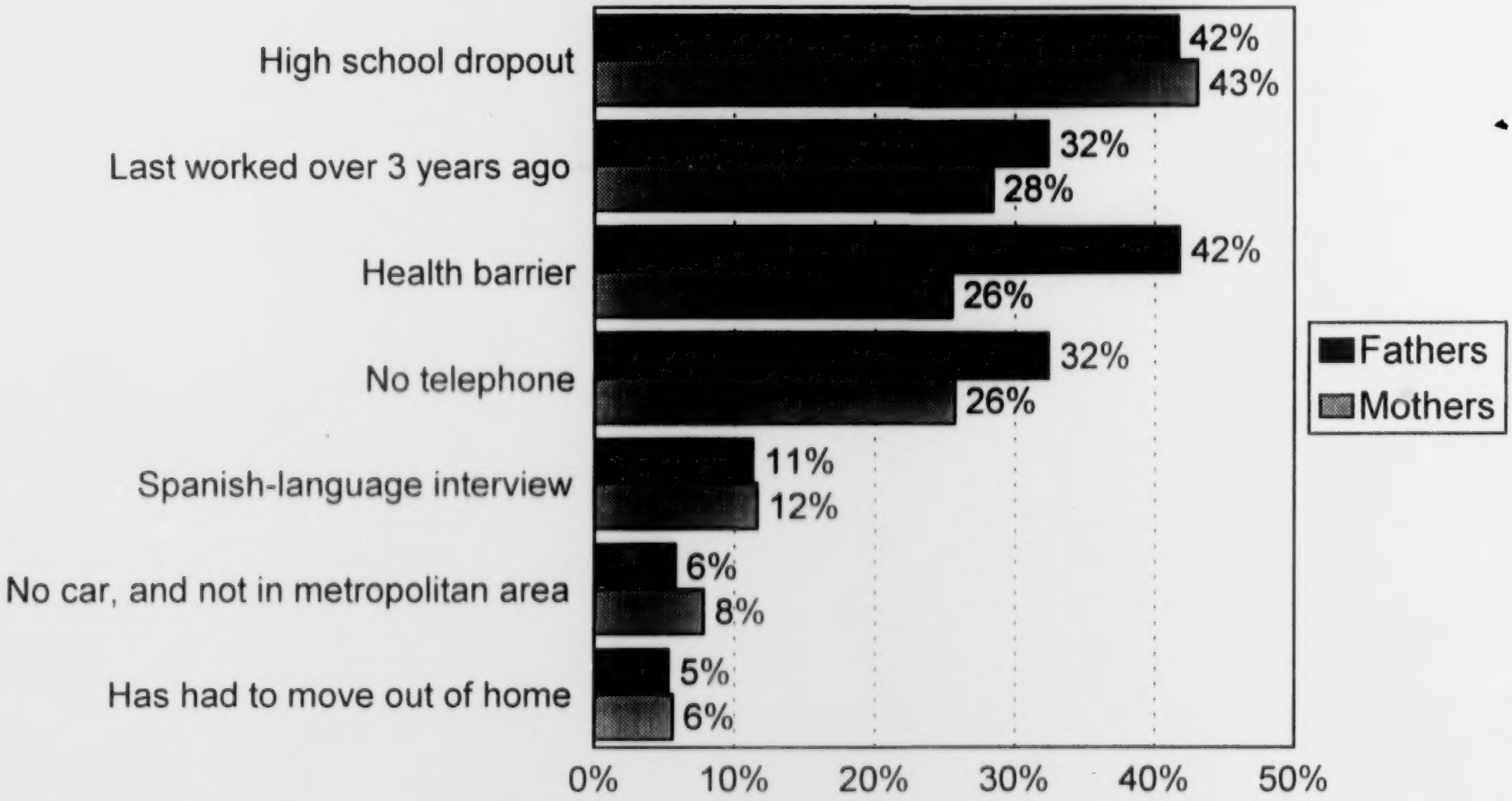
Characteristics	Poor dads who don't pay under an order	Poor moms who don't receive under an order
Percent Working	42%	38%
Of those not working, percent who are looking for work	16%	36%
Of Those Who Work:		
Average weeks worked	29	36
Average hours worked/week	39	33
Average personal earnings	$5,570	$5,276

Figure 1. Nonresident Fathers and Their Children by Their Poverty Status and Child Support Payments in 1997



Source: National Survey of America's Families

Figure 2. Potential Obstacles to Work

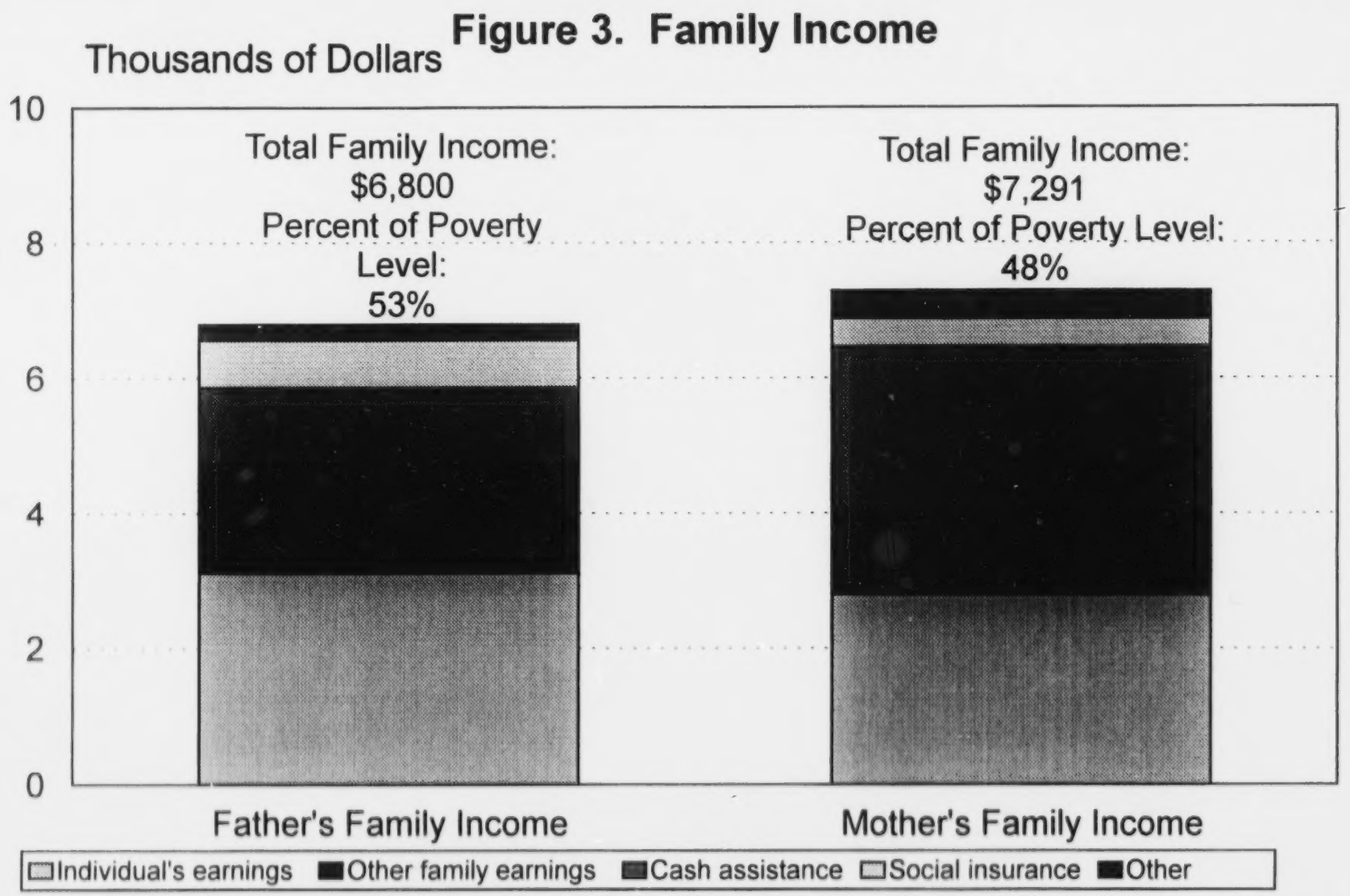


Universe: Poor Noninstitutionalized Noncustodial Fathers Who Don't Pay Child Support and Poor Custodial Mothers Who Don't Receive Child Support

Source: National Survey of America's Families

The Urban Institute

Figure 3. Family Income

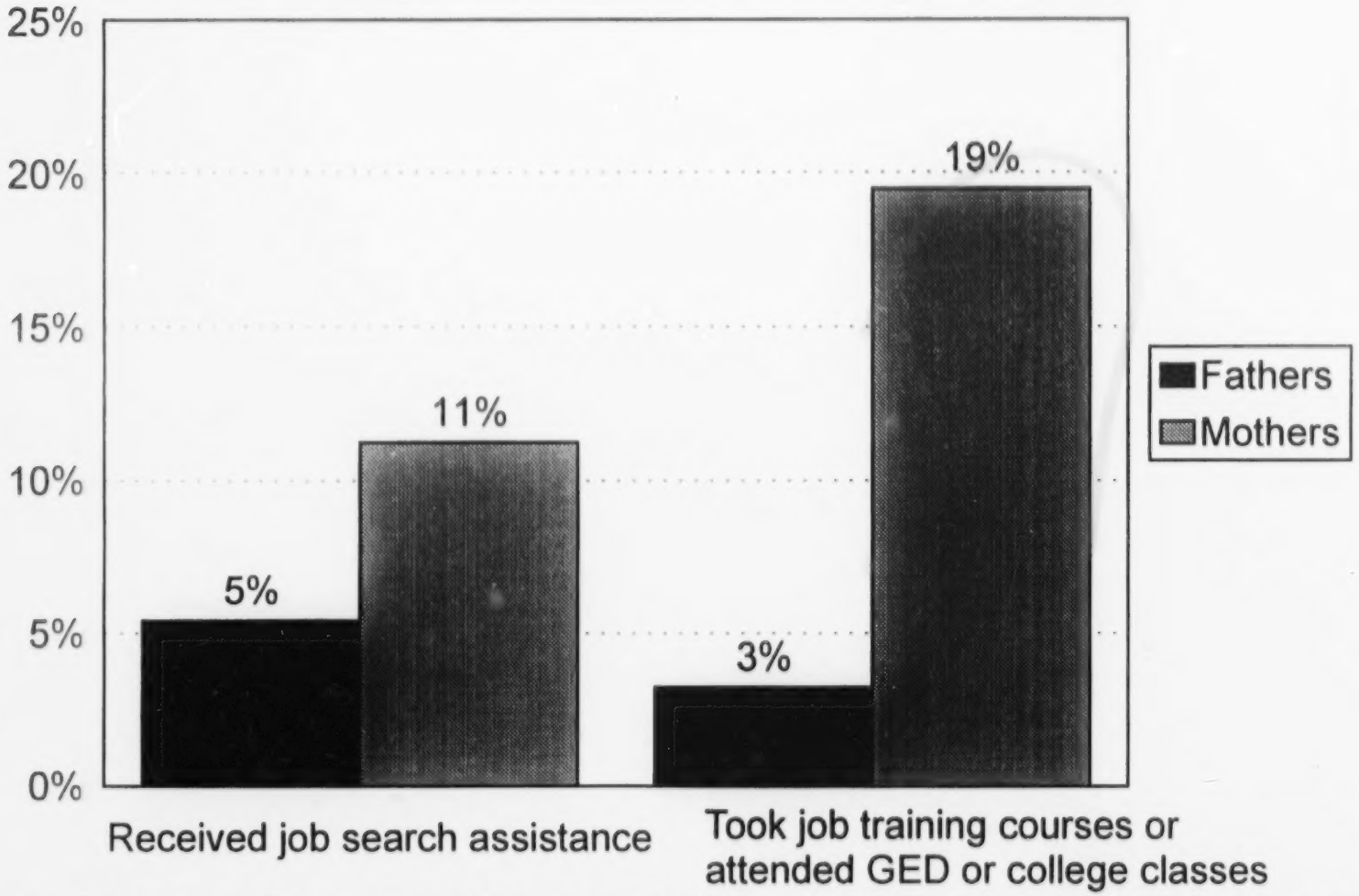


Universe: Poor Noninstitutionalized Noncustodial Fathers Who Don't Pay Child Support and Poor Custodial Mothers Who Don't Receive Child Support

Source: National Survey of America's Families

The Urban Institute

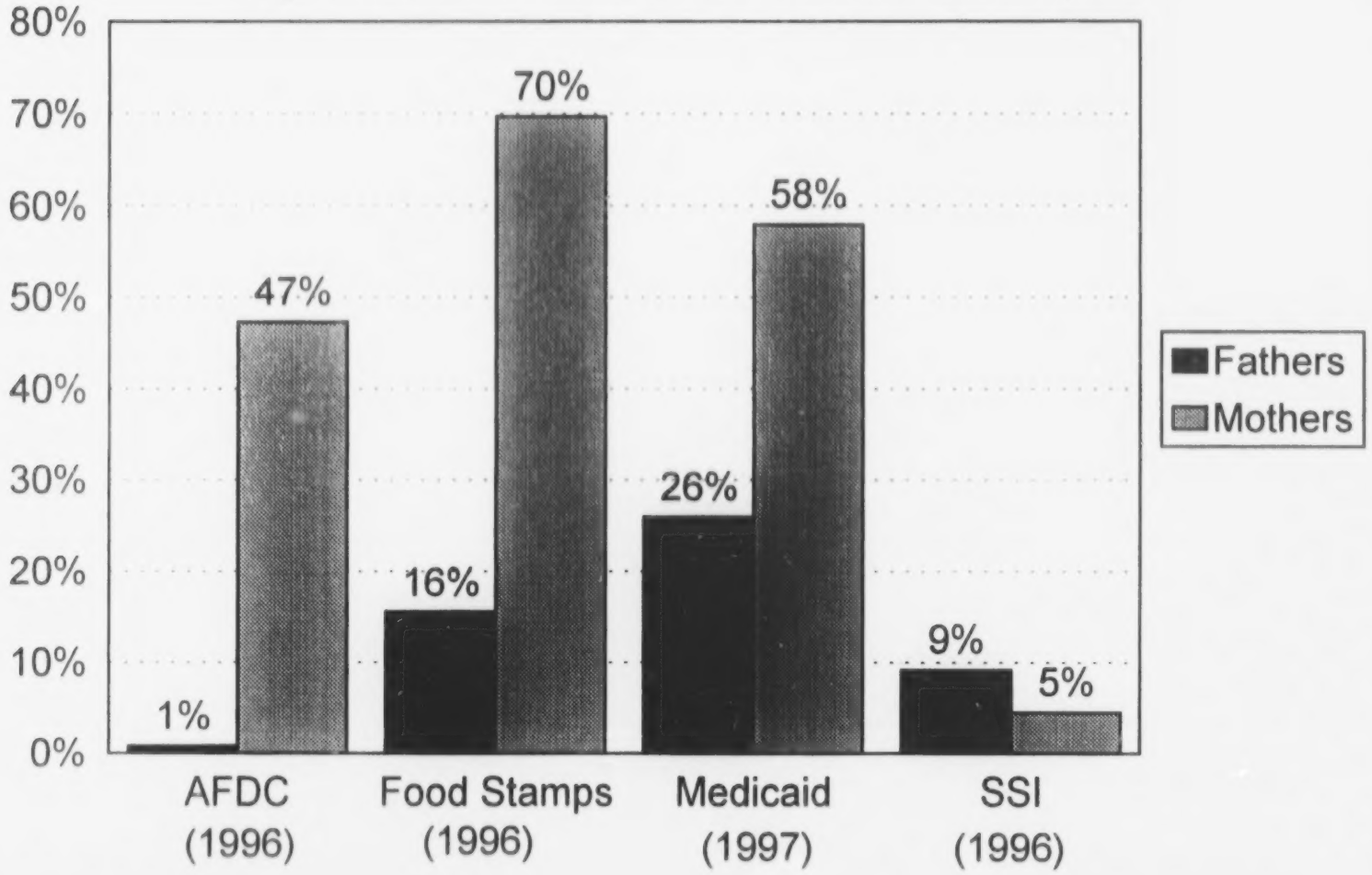
Figure 4. Who Received Job Search Assistance or Took Job Training or Educational Courses? (1996)



Universe: Poor Noninstitutionalized Noncustodial Fathers Who Don't Pay Child Support and Poor Custodial Mothers Who Don't Receive Child Support

Source: National Survey of America's Families

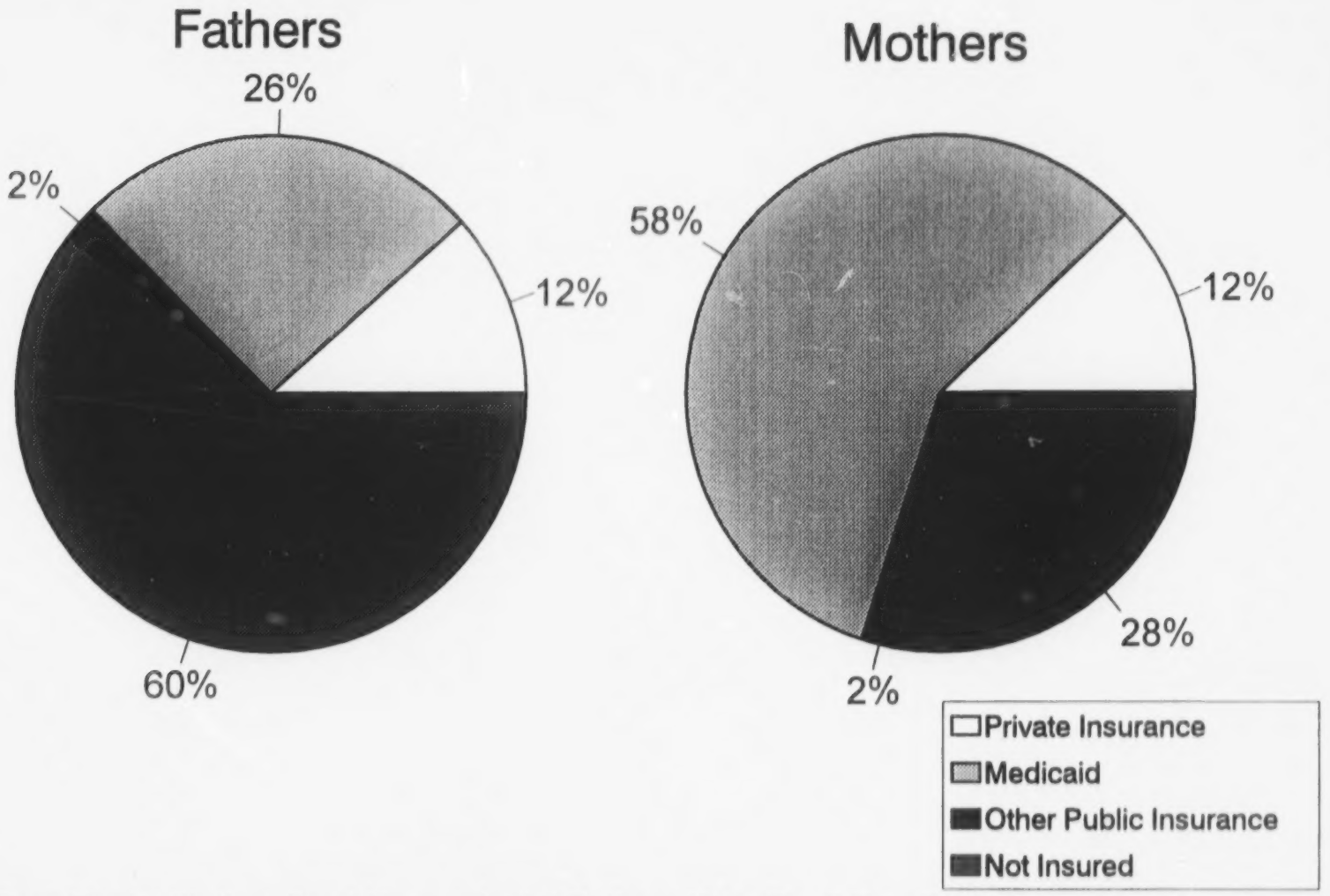
Figure 5. Public Assistance Receipt



Universe: Poor Noninstitutionalized Noncustodial Fathers Who Don't Pay Child Support and Poor Custodial Mothers Who Don't Receive Child Support

Source: National Survey of America's Families

Figure 6. Health Insurance



Universe: Poor Noninstitutionalized Noncustodial Fathers Who Don't Pay Child Support and Poor Custodial Mothers Who Don't Receive Child Support

Source: National Survey of America's Families

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